



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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LATEST MAP SERIES BY FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE OPENS NEW WINDOW ON WETLANDS

Seen any good wetlands lately?

The Fish and Wildlife Service has spotted nearly 100 million acres of these fragile natural areas throughout the United States and has prepared the first in a series of National Wetlands Inventory maps to show their location.

These maps cover about 30 percent of the Lower 48 States, or 900,000 square miles; six percent of Alaska, an additional 30,000 square miles; and the entire State of Hawaii, 6,450 square miles. They include most of the wetland areas given the highest priority for mapping by the Interior Department -- portions of the coastal zone, floodplains of major rivers, and the Midwest's "prairie pothole" region.

"These maps show many of the most sensitive and valuable natural areas in the United States," says Fish and Wildlife Service Director Robert Jantzen. "They provide the technical data about wetlands that people must have in order to make wise land management decisions."

Of the 215 million acres of wetlands that originally existed in the United States, the Fish and Wildlife Service now estimates that there are about 99 million acres left and that an additional 458,000 acres are lost to development, drainage, and agriculture each year -- an area half the size of Rhode Island.

Wetlands are considered to be the most biologically productive lands on earth. They shelter and nurture fish, shellfish, and migratory birds. They also provide natural flood and erosion control and help to purify water.

The new wetlands maps were developed by the Service's National Wetlands Inventory Project in St. Petersburg, Florida, using stereoscopic analysis of high-altitude aerial photographs. This first series of nearly 10,000 maps covers portions of 46 States. Resembling large-scale blueprints, the maps show wetlands ranging in size from thousands of acres to less than one acre, and describe their geography, hydrology, and vegetation. The primary products are maps at 1:24,000, 1:62,500, or 1:63,360 scales that display the location, shape, and characteristics of wetlands on U.S. Geological Survey base maps. These maps provide useful data for site-specific projects in localized areas. Maps at a scale of 1:100,000 are also available for some areas.

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The physical and biological information on these maps is based on a wetlands classification scheme developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1979 that has since been adopted as a standard by many Federal, State, and local government agencies.

Copies of the new National Wetland Inventory maps may be ordered from the U.S. Geological Survey through any of the following National Cartographic Information Center offices: National Cartographic Information Center, U.S. Geological Survey, 507 National Center, Reston, Virginia 22092 (telephone: 703/860-6045); the Eastern Mapping Center in Reston, Virginia; the Mid-Continent Mapping Center in Rolla, Missouri; the Rocky Mountain Mapping Center in Denver, Colorado; the Western Mapping Center in Menlo Park, California; and the National Space Technology Laboratory in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

With nearly 10,000 maps currently available, persons desiring to place orders should consult the U.S. Geological Survey's map index for map names. Prices for the maps vary, and can be obtained by contacting any of the above offices.

-- FWS-52 --

Technical editors only: Single copies of sample maps are available in limited supply from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's national wetlands coordinator at 202/343-2618.